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AFGHANISTAN

Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI)

SUCCESS STORY

Training Brings End to Local Disputes

Traditional dispute resolution in Shamal improved after elders attend training.



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After successfully resolving a dispute, local elders sign letters declaring the disputes closed permanently.

Elders in Shamal call conflict resolution jirgas that culminates in the peaceful resolution of three communal conflicts, including a family feud, inter-family dispute and land conflict.

February, 2014- Protracted local conflicts are a major source of instability in Afghanistan, and a majority of rural Afghans turn to traditional dispute resolution bodies composed of local elders when seeking to resolve disputes over land, property, marriage, and children. However, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms have broken down in many parts of Afghanistan where insurgent groups have sought to disrupt relations between the government and customary leaders and position the insurgency as the only viable alternative to the formal justice system.

Recognizing that effective traditional dispute resolution can be a powerful source of resilience in communities vulnerable to anti-government influences, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives worked with local elders in Khost's Shamal district to boost their conflict resolution skills. During a 12-day training seminar, elders from villages throughout Shamal as well as members of local Community Development Councils (CDCs) learned about conflict resolution techniques and mechanisms through group discussions and dispute simulations. After the training, the elders conducted three conflict resolution jirgas to resolve ongoing conflicts in their communities.

The result of these jirgas was the successful resolution of three conflicts: a long-running feud between members of an extended family, a fight between two children that had escalated into a dispute between two families, and a conflict over land. Following verbal agreement by all individuals involved, the elders signed letters stating that none of the parties to the three disputes would be justified in further retaliation and sent the letters to the District Governor as proof of their conflict resolution success.

Mr. Rahimullah, a resident of one of the villages previously been affected by one of the disputes, stated, "The workshop succeeded at solving the conflicts and from now on, there is no need to ask other people from other districts to solve any conflict." He added, "The training also helped to reduce the gap between local government and community." OTI is actively working to strengthen and improve traditional dispute resolution in communities across Afghanistan's East and South to bridge the gap between the informal and formal justice systems and resolve conflicts that undermine community cohesion.